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THE PREVALENCE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN GROWING UP WITH RELATIVES IN THE UK

BRIEFING PAPER **004**



Characteristics of children living with relatives in Northern Ireland

This briefing paper series provides snapshots from the research titled 'Kinship Care Re-visited: Using Census 2011 Microdata to Examine the Extent and Nature of Kinship Care in the UK' funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) grant ES/K008587/1.

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The responsibility for the analysis, results and the views expressed ultimately rests with the author.

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INTRODUCTION

The background to this study, the aims and the method were described in Briefing Paper 1, published in the autumn of 2015 [1].

This briefing paper, which is the fourth in a series, provides a brief overview of the characteristics of the children growing up with relatives in Northern Ireland. This series of briefing papers is published as part of a study funded by the ESRC to analyse microdata from the 2011 Census in order to provide nationally representative, reliable statistics and maps on the distribution and characteristics of kinship care households in the four countries of the UK.

RESULTS

The prevalence of children living in kinship care in Northern Ireland

At the time of the 2011 Census, there were just over 430,800 children (0-17 years) living in Northern Ireland [2].

Of all children in Northern Ireland, an estimated 4,940 (1.2%) children were living in kinship care (Table 1). This is similar to the prevalence of kinship care in Scotland (1.2%) [3], but lower than the prevalence in England (1.4%) [1] and Wales (1.5%) [4].

In other words, one in every 83 children in Northern Ireland were growing up in the care of relatives. The prevalence rates of kinship care at district level are given in Appendix A.

The kinship child population in Northern Ireland decreased by -5% between 2001 and 2011.

This is similar to the overall child population growth rate in Northern Ireland where, between 2001 and 2011, the total child population decreased by -4.6% [2].

Table 1. Estimates of children living in kinship care in 2001 and 2011 in Northern Ireland

	Number of children in kinship care	Prevalence of kinship care (%)
2001	5,200	1.1%
2011	4,940	1.2%

Source: ONS. Estimates calculated from 2011 Census Secure Microdata
2001 estimates from Nandy et al., 2011 [5]

Gender of children in kinship care in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, there were slightly more male children (51% of kinship child population) living in kinship care.

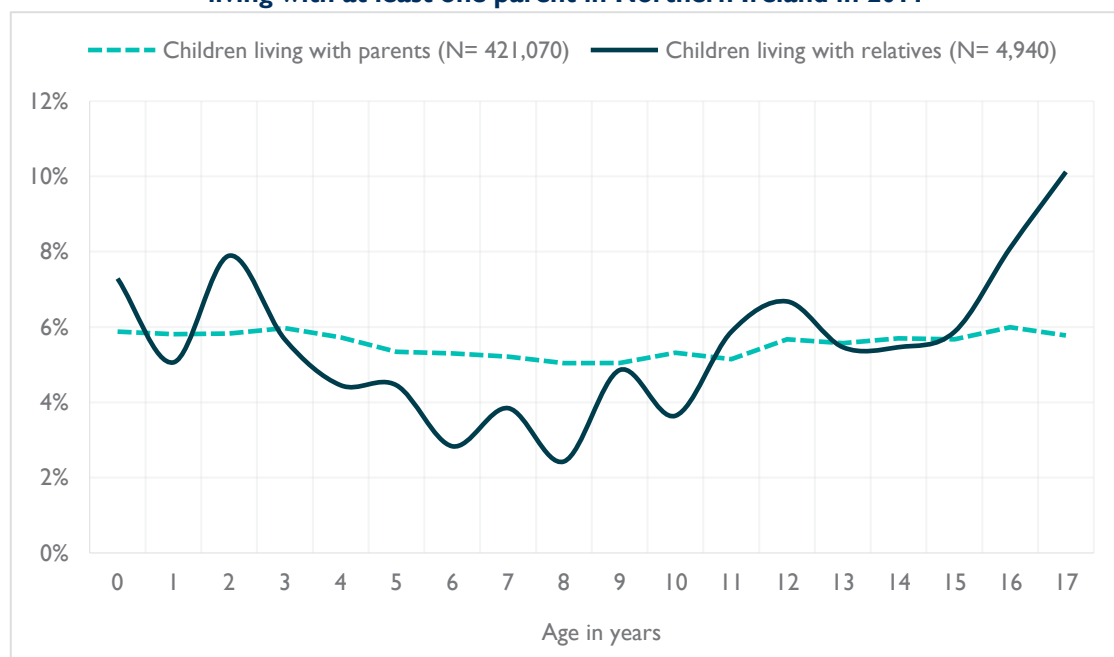
The gender distribution of children in kinship care was slightly different to that of the total child population in Northern Ireland, where 52% of the children were male.

The age distribution of children in kinship care in Northern Ireland

The age distribution of children in kinship care, compared with those living with at least one parent is shown in Figure 1.

There were proportionately more (55%) 0-9 year-old children in kinship care in 2011 compared to the 45% of children between the ages of 10-17 years living with parents. This is different to the pattern seen in England, Wales and Scotland, where there were proportionately more children aged 10-17 years living in kinship care.

Figure 1. The estimated age distribution of children living in kinship care compared with children living with at least one parent in Northern Ireland in 2011



Source: ONS. Estimates calculated from 2011 Census Secure Microdata

The prevalence and population growth of kinship care in Northern Ireland by age

The numbers, prevalence and kinship child population growth rates by age group, between 2001 and 2011, are shown in Table 2.

Compared with the number of children in kinship care in 2001, by 2011, the number of children in kinship care who were 0-4 years of age had grown significantly by 61%, whilst the number of children who were between 10-14 years and 15-17 years of age had grown by 9% and 22% respectively. Over the same period, the number of children aged 5-9 years in kinship care decreased over the same period.

Table 2. Estimates of children in kinship care by children's age in Northern Ireland in 2001 and 2011

Age group	Number of children in kinship care (2001)	Number of children in kinship care (2011)	Prevalence rate (2001)	Prevalence rate (2011)	Kinship child population growth rate (2001-2011)
0 - 4 years	933	1,500	0.8%	1.2%	61%
5 - 9 years	1,267	910	1.0%	0.8%	-28%
10 - 14 years	1,467	1,340	1.1%	1.1%	9%
15 - 17 years	1,533	1,190	1.8%	1.6%	22%
Total (Northern Ireland)	5,200	4,940	1.1%	1.2%	-5%

Source: ONS. Estimates calculated from 2011 Census Secure Microdata, 2001 estimates from Nandy et al., 2011 [5]

Children's relationship to the head of the household

Most (60%) of the children growing up in kinship care were living in households headed by a grandparent, whilst 31% were living in households headed by a sibling. The other 22% of the children were in households headed by another relative such as an aunt, an uncle or a cousin. The proportion of sibling carers is much higher than that seen in the other countries in the UK.

When compared with the households in 2001, the proportion of grandparent-headed and other-relative-headed kinship households has increased, whilst the proportion of sibling-headed households has decreased (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Estimates of children's relationship to their kin carers in Northern Ireland in 2001 (N=5,200) and 2011 (N=4,940)



Source: ONS. Estimates calculated from 2011 Census Secure Microdata, 2001 estimates from Nandy et al., 2011 [5]

Note on the kinship children's relationship to the head of the household

It was not possible to ascertain whether the household reference persons were the children's primary carers from the Census data. Therefore, it is possible that in some households, persons other than the household reference person were the child's primary caregiver. For example, there may be grandparent-headed households where a sibling is the primary carer and also sibling-headed households where a grandparent or other relative is the primary caregiver.

Prevalence of kinship care within ethnic groups in Northern Ireland

Prevalence of kinship care in 2011 within the white/non-white ethnic groups are given in Table 3.

The prevalence of kinship care was similar across the two groups. The non-white group could not be further disaggregated due to very small numbers within some of the minority ethnic groups.

Table 3. Estimated prevalence of children in kinship care within ethnic groups in Northern Ireland in 2011

Northern Ireland	Children living with relatives (N=9,430)	Prevalence of kinship care within ethnic group	Prevalence per 1000 children within ethnic group
Non-White	120	1.2%	12
White	4,800	1.2%	12

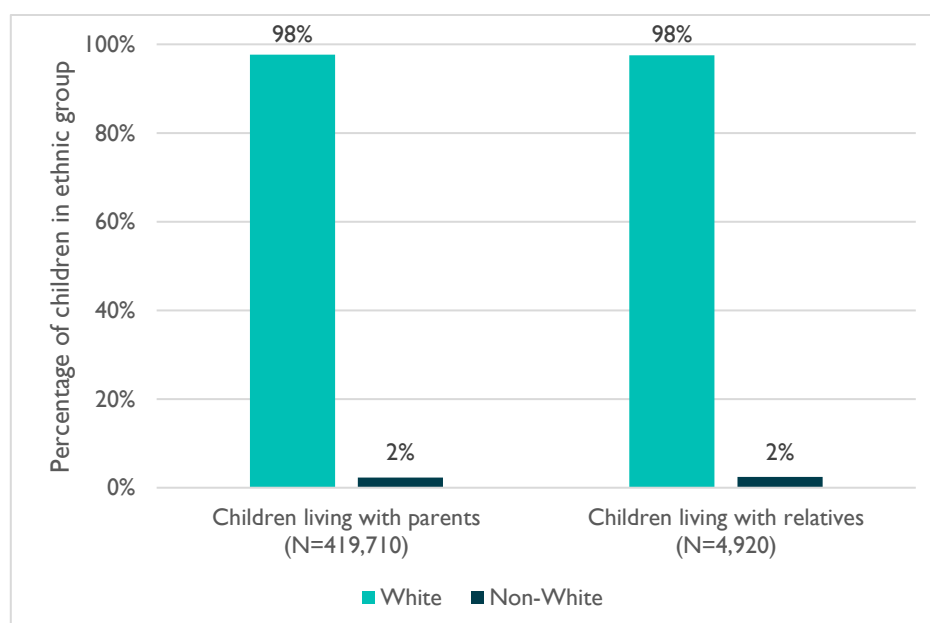
Source: ONS. Estimates calculated from 2011 Census Secure Microdata

Distribution of kinship care within ethnic groups in Northern Ireland

In contrast to England, where nearly a third (32%) of the children in kinship care were non-white, only 2% of children in kinship care in Northern Ireland were non-white (Figure 3). This is similar to the makeup of the child population of Northern Ireland, where an estimated 2% were non-white.

There was no statistical association between a child's ethnicity and whether the child was in kinship care in Northern Ireland. This is different to the pattern seen in England, Wales and Scotland, where non-white children were more likely to be in kinship care when compared with white children.

Figure 3. The estimated ethnic distribution of children living in kinship care compared with children living with at least one parent in Northern Ireland in 2011



Source: ONS. Estimates calculated from 2011 Census Secure Microdata

Long-term health problems and disability

The Census respondents were required to indicate whether the children had been affected by a long-term health condition or disability (which they had been affected by or expected to be affected by for at least 12 months) and to assess how their daily activities were affected by such a condition.

When compared with children who were growing up with at least one parent, children in kinship care in Northern Ireland were 1.5 times more likely to have a long-term health problem or disability that limited their day-to-day activities¹ (Table 4).

Table 4. Estimated distribution of long-term health problems and disability in kinship children compared with children living with at least one parent in Northern Ireland in 2011

	Children living with parents (N=419,710)	Children living with relatives (N=4,920)
Day-to-day activities limited a lot	2%	3%
Day-to-day activities limited a little	3%	4%
Day-to-day activities not limited	95%	92%

Source: ONS. Estimates calculated from 2011 Census Secure Microdata

Residence of children living in kinship care in Northern Ireland

The data were further explored to establish whether the children were usual residents in the UK; whether they were non-UK-born, short-term residents; and whether they lived away from home during term-time^{2,3}.

When compared with children who were growing up with at least one parent, there were significantly more kinship children who were not usual residents (students living away from home during term-time and non-UK-born short-term citizens). A child in kinship care was 0.5 times more likely not to be a usual resident compared to a child who was growing up with at least one parent⁴.

Table 5. Estimated distribution of the residence type of kinship children compared with children living with at least one parent in Northern Ireland in 2011

	Children living with parents (N= 421,070)	Children living with relatives (N=4,920)
Usual resident	99.6%	99.2%
Not a usual resident	0.4%	0.8%

Source: ONS. Estimates calculated from 2011 Census Secure Microdata

Poverty and deprivation in the population of children in kinship care in Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Census 2011 microdata currently does not include any data on the IMD [6] variables. Therefore poverty and deprivation in the kinship child population in Northern Ireland could not be explored in time for this publication.

Find the latest briefing papers and maps on the project website
www.bristolkinshipstudy.co.uk

¹ A census short-term UK resident is anyone born outside of the UK who, on 27 March 2011, had stayed or intended to stay in the UK for a period of three months or more but less than 12 months.

² These are exclusive categories used by the Office for National Statistics to differentiate between the groups in the population.

³ $\chi^2(1)=21.83, p < .001, OR=0.5$

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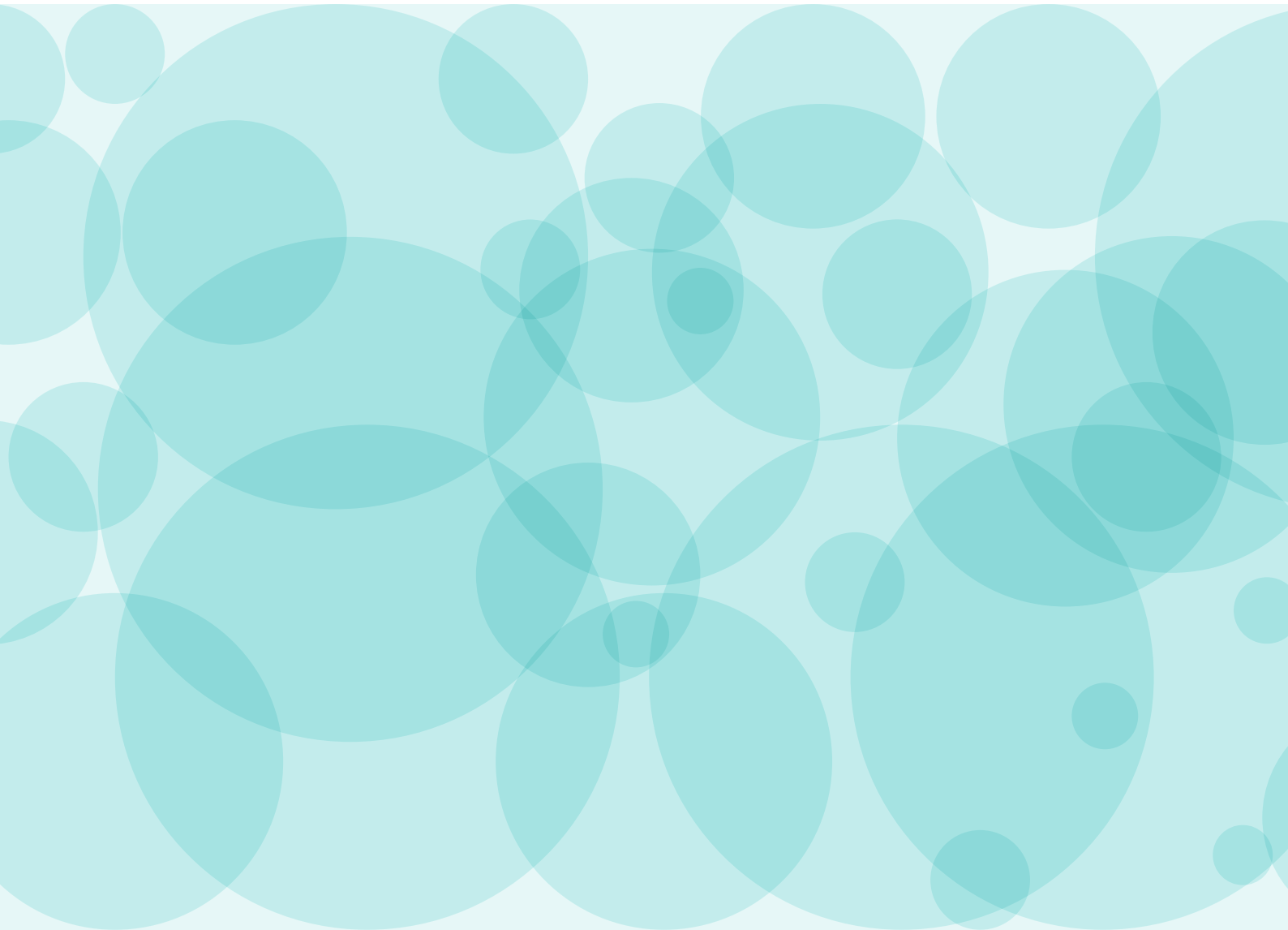
**Appendix A. Estimated prevalence of children kinship care by local authority district
in Northern Ireland, 2011**

	Local Authority District	Number of children in kinship care	Prevalence of children in kinship care	Number of children in kinship care per 1000 children
95A	Derry	130	1.0%	10
95B	Limavady	140	0.8%	8
95C	Coleraine	180	1.2%	12
95D	Ballymoney	130	0.9%	9
95E	Moyle	40	0.5%	5
95F	Larne	60	0.5%	5
95G	Ballymena	990	1.7%	17
95H	Magherafelt	90	1.0%	10
95I	Cookstown	80	0.6%	6
95J	Strabane	170	1.3%	13
95K	Omagh	70	0.7%	7
95L	Fermanagh	240	1.0%	10
95M	Dungannon	510	1.9%	19
95N	Craigavon	180	1.1%	11
95O	Armagh	130	0.9%	9
95P	Newry and Mourne	190	1.3%	13
95Q	Banbridge	90	1.3%	13
95R	Down	90	1.0%	10
95S	Lisburn	480	1.5%	15
95T	Antrim	120	1.0%	10
95U	Newtownabbey	x	x	x
95V	Carrickfergus	260	1.0%	10

Source: ONS. Estimates calculated from 2011 Census Secure Microdata

NOTE.

Prevalence rates in **red** ink indicate that the district kinship child population prevalence rate is higher than the Northern Ireland national prevalence rate for kinship care of 1.2%.



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